



SHERPA  
Rural Science-Society-Policy  
Interfaces

## GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



### MAP SOUTHWEST ALENTEJO, PORTUGAL

The MAP of Southwest Alentejo (SW) operated at a regional level in Portugal. The group consists of local citizens and businesses, representatives of science, and of the regional and national government.

Over the years, the region has attracted migrant workers due to labour shortages in the agricultural sector. This has created great cultural diversity in the area, making inclusive and collaborative governance essential to address the challenges. Successful examples are already taking place in social policies, with the effort to integrate children from migrant communities in schools. Closer engagement with the population, especially vulnerable populations, is crucial to better assess their needs.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Future rural policy

- Involve stakeholder & community in strategy design and improve public discussion processes for investments and planning.
- Strengthen local initiative working groups and transform LAG/LEADER into entities that promote local action.
- Improve the Territorial Forum model for meaningful participation and build capacity of parish councils & institutional leaders.
- Harmonize a common immigration policy at EU level, invest in cross-border networks and the categorisation of migrant journeys.

#### Future rural research

- Assess rural territories' social & economic changes.
- Quantify the tourism impact on the territory.
- Define models for governance and participative citizenship.
- Analyse immigrants' skills, socio-biographical factors, mobility patterns and motivations, and the impact of remittances.
- Investigate inclusion of migrants by resident populations.
- Study the social economy impact on rural revitalisation.
- Prioritise research with local involvement.

## KEY STRENGTHS

- Great diversity and multiplicity of local actors, with very distinct and sometimes conflicting interests, which could foster the multilevel participation process.
- No lack of people with the “ability to think” in a structured way. If there is room for open-hearted debate, the territory can produce differentiated and welcoming responses to various sensibilities or interests.

## KEY NEEDS

- Capacity to align priorities, define layers of intervention and clarify the roles of each interest group.
- Alignment between different actors to avoid doubts and mistrust.
- Accountability of decision-makers for the impacts of policies on the territory and ensuring strategic and political commitments across sectors.
- General perception exists about housing conditions for migrants in rural areas, reflecting also the inability to find solutions that are transversal to rural and urban areas.



## EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

### Odemira Territory Forum

The Territory Forum is a platform for civic engagement and collaboration aimed at improving the quality of life for everyone in the community. Decentralized sessions are held across all parishes to bring the Forum and its principles closer to citizens. Through these sessions, the Forum also promotes solidarity and local empowerment, and seek solutions to identified problems, with the aim of involving people of all ages.

